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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1786

INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE

RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE

RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2240

RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 2546

RHMFIS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 000646

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/FO, NEA/ELA

ALSO FOR A/S SILVERBERG AND PDAS WARLICK

USUN FOR KHALILZAD/WOLFF/KUMAR/PHEE

NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/YERGER/GAVITO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/08/2018

TAGS: PREL PGOV PTER PINR ASEC CASC UNSC EAIR SA

IR, LE

SUBJECT: LEBANON: SINIORA TO GO ON AIR AT 1400

REF: A. BEIRUT 642

1B. BEIRUT 618

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires a.i. Michele J. Sison for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

11. (C) Prime Minister Fouad Siniora will go on air at 1400 local time to address the nation. His view on a Saudi-proposed Arab peacekeeping contingent, according to a PM aide, is "favorable only if feasible." The British Ambassador said the EU ambassadors met to discuss emergency preparedness; only the Italians are actively looking to move citizens from west Beirut. Acting Foreign Minister Tareq Mitri will use a UNIFIL helicopter to facilitate travel to Cairo for the May 11 emergency Arab League foreign ministers' meeting. Minister of Telecommunications Marwan Hamadeh, according to the Siniora government, remains committed to the Cabinet's decision to transfer Hizballah-allied head of airport security and declare illegal Hizballah's fiber optics network. End summary.

SUPPORT FOR ARAB PEACEKEEPERS?

12. (C) At 1245, the Charge spoke to Rola Noureddine, the niece of and advisor to PM Siniora. Noureddine said that the PM is favorable to the Arab peacekeeping force idea if it is feasible. If not feasible, she continued, then he is not favorable. She added that no countries will contribute if it is not feasible. Also important to the PM, she said, was the need for a minimal level of consent by the Lebanese people. She told the Charge the PM is planning to make his televised address at 1400 today.

13. (C) At 1130 local time on May 10, Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea called the Charge to say that the idea of requesting an Arab peacekeeping force, potentially contributed to by Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, Morocco, and other countries supportive of Lebanon, (Ref A) was getting traction. Geagea said that he spoke to Prime Minister Fouad Siniora after midnight and reported that the PM is leaning towards endorsing the idea. Geagea said he also spoke to Ghattas Khoury, senior advisor to Saad Hariri, who reported that Saad was on board with the idea. Geagea also noted that Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation carried a story quoting an unnamed Egyptian source who said that Egypt is looking at providing peacekeeping troops for Lebanon.

ITALIANS ONLY COUNTRY MOVING
CITIZENS FROM WEST BEIRUT

¶4. (C) The Charge met with British Ambassador Frances Guy at 1130 to compare notes on emergency preparedness planning. Guy said that there was a meeting of EU ambassadors the previous night. The Italians are the only ones actively trying to get their residents out of west Beirut. The British have 500 citizens registered with their Embassy, but estimate that in the event of an evacuation, they would have to evacuate between 10,000 and 20,000 people. Guy added that the Syrians have agreed to issue visas to British citizens at the border.

¶5. (C) The British Ambassador noted that Hizballah has not yet targeted any government of Lebanon state institutions, but after Minister of Telecommunications Marwan Hamadeh publicly stated today his commitment to the Cabinet's decisions (Ref B), the British Ambassador wondered if the Telecommunications Ministry would be the first institution targeted.

ACTING FM MITRI REQUESTS UNIFIL
TRANSPORT TO ARAB LEAGUE FM MEETING

¶6. (C) At 1115, the Charge spoke with Acting Foreign Minister Tareq Mitri. He expressed gratitude for the previous day's statements made by the White House and the Secretary. He

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asked us to continue to encourage the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and its Commander, General Michel Sleiman. The Charge briefed Mitri on the telephone calls that she and USDP Edelman made the night before to Sleiman, emphasizing the need for LAF protection of institutions of the state of Lebanon, the government of Lebanon, and the Grand Serail. She told Mitri that the U.S. was in communication with the Egyptian, Saudi, UAE, and Jordanian governments to encourage strong support for the GOL and condemnation of Hizballah. Mitri said he is not yet sure who will accompany him to Cairo for the Sunday, May 11 Arab League foreign ministers' meeting, adding that it is not yet decided if it will be PM senior advisor Mohammed Chatah or another individual.

¶7. (C) The French Ambassador said that Siniora's staff phoned him last night to ask for a helicopter lift to move Mitri to the emergency Arab League FMs' meeting on May 11. As the French helicopter is part of the French UNIFIL contingent, Parent said he spoke to UNIFIL Commander Claudio Graziano, who agreed to provide the helicopter on Sunday to transport Mitri and whoever would accompany him.

TELECOMMINISTER REMAINS
FIRM ON CABINET'S DECISION

¶8. (C) At 1000, the Charge spoke to Marwan Hamadeh, Minister of Telecommunications. He underscored to the Charge the government's resolve to transfer the Hizballah-allied airport chief, Brigadier General Wafiq Choucair, and pursue Hizballah's communications' network (Ref B). Hamadeh added that Prime Minister Fouad Siniora needs continued USG support and that both the PM and March 14/Progressive Socialist Party leader Walid Jumblatt's spirits were bolstered by Secretary's comments the previous night.

SISON